3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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ma-kpeem, fem.) are a foil to those of parents and children. It is convenient here to state the range within which grandparents are acknowledged. On both the mother's side and the father's side grandparents are primarily one's own parent's own parents. The terms are extended to own grandparents' siblings (in particular to a grandfather's brothers) and their wives, but rarely beyond that limit, and never, in my experience, beyond a grandfather's agnatic cousin. This is correlated with the cycle of development of the joint family. By the time a man has grandchildren he is not likely to be still sharing a homestead with his brother, let alone cousin, and his classificatory siblings will have only a formal interest in his grandchildren.

The diagram on p. 148 sums up this discussion of the range of parenthood acknowledged by the Tallensi.

The Significance of 'Having no Father alive'

Clearly the formula 'Begetting does not cross the (inner) lineage' covers a complicated tissue of social relationships. Another aspect of it appears in the significance Tallensi attach to whether or not one's father is alive.

This is a matter of considerable practical importance, more particularly for men, but also for women. A person's status in his clan, and in every segment of it to which he belongs, depends largely on whether 'his father is alive (*u ba bɛ*)' or not (*u ba ka*). It is correlated with the distribution of jural and ritual authority and responsibility in the lineage. During his own father's lifetime a person's status is submerged in that of his father for jural and ritual purposes. He comes directly under his father's authority, as we shall see presently. He attains his first degree of independence only on the death of his own father. This is shown to some extent in every department of his life, but most significantly in the sphere of ritual. A man cannot make sacrifices to his patrilineal ancestors in his own right while his own father is alive. His father does this on his behalf. It is only when his father dies that a man can sacrifice directly to his ancestors; for such sacrifices can only be offered through the medium of his father's spirit.

This marks a very important stage in a man's social maturation, whatever his chronological age may be. Henceforth the responsibility for keeping the goodwill of his ancestors rests directly on his own shoulders. It will be he himself, for instance, not his father, who decides whether a sacrifice demanded by such-and-such an ancestor should be offered at once or postponed. And with this first stage of ritual responsibility usually goes some degree of autonomy in jural and economic matters, as we shall see presently. Nevertheless, no man attains full autonomy within the limits of the lineage system until he is altogether 'fatherless'. While he has a proxy or classificatory father alive he is still to some extent under paternal authority. It is worth

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considering this situation more closely as it will give us a further insight into the working of the classificatory principle.

The simplest and clearest index to it is in certain observances at the funeral of any man of one's father's generation. A man whose 'father' is alive may not perform the principal rites such as the killing of the goat or sheep from which the loin-cover for the corpse will be cut, or the rites of 'entering the *zɔŋ*'; and he may not eat the ceremonial food associated with or consumed in these rites. To infringe these taboos is not only an insult to one's 'father' but a sin, since it is equivalent to wishing him dead. There are men whose proxy or classificatory fathers are alive who know more about ritual matters than their seniors. I have seen such men stand by and direct others in the performance of funeral rites which they themselves are forbidden to carry out. I have seen them raging with exasperation at the incompetence of the old men or women who were carrying out the rites; but they would have been shocked at the suggestion that it would save temper and trouble if they performed the rites themselves.

Again, the application of the notion varies relatively to the dimensions of the lineage involved in a particular situation and the whole constellation of classificatory kinship recognized within it. At one extreme stand matters that concern only the members of the nuclear lineage. That would be the case, for example, if the nuclear lineage assembled to make a sacrifice to its immediate founding ancestor. Thus, to take a lineage we have met in an earlier chapter, if Katiŋoo biis meet to sacrifice to Katiŋoo, only his grandsons and great-grandsons are concerned (see genealogy on p. 68). In such a situation the two patri-segments of Katiŋoo biis (Duun biis and Baa biis) are each formally recognized as a separate unit and the sacrificial meat is divided equally between them. If Ɔmara were dead, the share due to his patri-segment would fall to his sons; and they would, in this context, say that they have no father. They are, in fact, through the eldest son, taking the place of their father in intra-lineage relations; their status is no longer submerged in that of their father. They are thinking in terms of the contraposition of the two component patri-segments of the lineage. Within the limits of the nuclear lineage, the term 'father' (*ba*) means own father and a man whose own father is dead has no father. He speaks of his proxy-fathers (father's brothers and cousins) as his *ba-pirib*, junior fathers, or *ba-biernam*, senior fathers.

The higher the segmentary order of the lineage involved, the wider is the application of this notion. If the situation involves the inner lineage, then the nuclear lineage emerges as the smallest corporate unit recognized. This happens in sacrifices to the founding ancestor of the inner lineage or in certain funeral customs where food contributions are made by the head of the nuclear lineage on behalf of the whole unit. In this case a man whose own father is dead but whose father's brother

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the lineage often leads to conflict and it is in these conflicts that the process of fission is often completed. They arise chiefly in connexion with the inheritance of widows and the succession to the lineage *bɔŋar* (that is, to the headship of the lineage)—the two situations in which consistency between the corporate unity of the inner lineage and the recognition of generation differences is most severely tested. What happens is that the heads of what were previously regarded as the component segments of an inner lineage advance contradictory claims to the custody of the lineage *bɔŋar*. One may claim it on the grounds of seniority of generation—being the classificatory father of the other—while his opponent refuses to admit this and claims seniority by age. It is a conflict between 'seniority of begetting (*dɔŋam kpɛmɔt*)' (i.e. by generation) and 'seniority of predestiny' or, as we might say, chance (*Naa-Yin kpɛmɔt*) (i.e. by age). The long-drawn-out quarrel between Yinyɛla and the other elders of Tɔŋ-Puhug turned on a point of this kind. Yinyɛla claimed to be a generation superior to the heads of all the other segments of Lɛbhtiis yiri,[1] but the other elders would not admit the validity of this claim. The genealogical evidence supported Yinyɛla, and the precedents he quoted from the days of his father and grandfather were probably accurate. But that was not the question; the relations of the segments of Lɛbhtiis yiri had changed in the last two generations and, as the elders put it, 'begetting has died out (*dɔŋam kpiya*)'.

An earlier stage in the fading out of classificatory kinship appeared in the controversy over Baroog's widows. Nindɔŋat's eldest son was discovered to be secretly courting one of the women and Baroog's father immediately raised an outcry. Nindɔŋat, he protested, was his 'son' and Baroog's 'brother', hence Nindɔŋat's son would be committing incest if he married Baroog's widow, his classificatory mother. But Nindɔŋat stood by his son, arguing that they were no longer members of a single inner lineage but of two separate inner lineages. 'We are each our own *dug* (*ti a ti dug ti dug*),' he said. The weight of public opinion in the clan was against him, however, and the woman in the case took fright. But a split in the lineage is inevitable, though it may take a generation to complete.

Change of Status Due to Death of 'Father' Shown in Property Relations

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There is more to be said about the social consequences of having or not having a father alive, and we shall revert to the subject later from another point of view. What is so far clear is that a man's social status, particularly in jural and ritual matters, but also in economic affairs, advances step by step with the dying off of his fathers. Strictly speaking, he is not altogether autonomous until he has no more fathers within the range of the inner lineage, but in practice he is free of effective

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 196.

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paternal control when he has no more fathers in the nuclear lineage. The death of his own father marks the beginning of what might be called this process of emancipation, though it is not overtly felt to be that by the natives. As previous references have shown, this is usually the thin end of the wedge that in due course splits the joint family economically and eventually gives the sons jural and ritual independence. It is not too much to say that the cycle of fission and reintegration in the joint family, with its co-ordinate processes of ramification in the lineage, is kept in motion by the deaths of fathers. That is one reason why the relations of successive generations are most conspicuously symbolized in funeral rites and ceremonies.

Underlying all changes in status due to the extinction of particular social relationships are changes in property relations which include, for the Tallensi, both rights over people and rights over material objects and economic resources. These rights pass from one generation to the next by inheritance or succession. There are rights over farm-land, the basic capital resource of the natives, and over homesteads; rights of disposal over livestock and other valuables, as well as over services and social bonds that have been created in exchange for valuables; rights over the working power and allegiance of men, women, and children; and last but not least, rights to the custody of ancestor shrines and other religious objects and to the politico-ritual offices that go with some of them.

All these property relations are tied directly to the lineage structure; they are graded and interlocked with one another in conformity with that structure. They fall into two major categories: patrimonial rights and property, for which the Tallensi have a specific term, *faar*; and individual rights and property, for which there is no specific term. Looking at it through native eyes, in terms of the continuity of the lineage and the march of the generations, we can see why this is so. *Faar* belongs to the lineage—it may be only the nuclear lineage or it may be the maximal lineage. All the members of the lineage are potential heirs to it. But the man who is in possession at a given time has complete freedom in using it—though not in disposing of it. On the other hand, individually acquired property and rights belong to the individual. A 'fatherless' man is free to use, dispose of, or destroy his individually acquired property—be it a piece of land, an animal, a garment, money, or whatnot—as he wishes. A man subject to some degree of paternal authority is in theory obliged to be ruled by his 'father' in the use and disposal of his individual property, though in practice he has a very large measure of freedom in this matter. But the crucial point is this. Individual property becomes patrimonial property when, as inevitably happens on the death of the original owner, it is inherited. In this way it comes about that every segment of a lineage tends to have its own transmissible *faar*.